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1897

FROM A BOOK FUND COMMEMORATING
RUTH GERALDINE ASHEN
CLASS OF 1931

It's a sad thing
when a man is to be so soon forgotten
And the shining in his soul
gone from the earth
With no thing remaining;

And it's a sad thing
when a man shall die
And forget love
which is the shiningness of life;

But it's a sadder thing
that a man shall forget love
And he not dead but walking in the field
of a May morning
And listening to the voice of the thrush.

—R.G.A., in *A Yearbook of Stanford Writing*, 1931

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THE CROSS BENEATH THE RING

AND OTHER POEMS

THE CROSS BENEATH THE RING

And Other Poems

BY THE LATE

E. F. M. BENECKE

AUTHOR OF "WOMEN IN GREEK POETRY"

LONDON

SWAN SONNENSCHEIN & CO., LIM.

PATERNOSTER SQUARE

1897

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

THE author of the following poems was born in 1870, was educated at Haileybury and Balliol College, Oxford, and lost his life in the Alps on July 16th, 1895, when in his twenty-sixth year. He had intended to adopt the profession of a schoolmaster, which had great attractions for him. He published, while an undergraduate, *Apospasmata Critica* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1892) and, shortly after taking his degree, *Poetarum Latinorum Index* (London: Methuen, 1894). He also produced translations of Appian's *Civil Wars*, Book I. (Blackwell, 1894), and of Professor Comparetti's *Vergil in the Middle Ages* (London: Sonnenschein, 1895).

Since his death there has appeared an *Index to a Selection of Greek Passages* (Blackwell, 1896), and also *Antimachus of Colophon and the Position of Women in Greek Poetry* (Sonnenschein, 1896). The former was intended to be a companion volume to the Latin Index already mentioned; the latter is a fragment of a larger work dealing with the origin of the romantic element in poetry, on which the author had been engaged for some time when he met with his death.

The present collection of poems is published in response to the wishes of several friends. Though written at considerable intervals, they were grouped and arranged by the author himself in an order substantially identical with that now adopted, and there is reason to believe that he wished to publish them.

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THE CROSS BENEATH THE RING

ἐν γὰρ τῶν ἀδυνάτων ἡ χαλεπῶν ἐστι,
μὴ κοινωνήσαντας τῶν ἔργων κριτὰς γενέσθαι
σπουδαίους.

Arist. *Polit.* viii. 6.

B

One Night.

FLUTTERED a moth to a bright
Blazing lamp's banquet;
A hand put out the light.
Did the moth thank it?

Fate broke the poisoned bowl
Before I drank it;
Took him, and saved my soul.
Do I thank it?

The Ground-whirl of the Ruined Leaves of Hope.

ALL last Spring, when hand clasped hand,
And love gleamed golden on Time's swift sand,
What was the voice of old earth to us,
Breathed from her spring-lips tremulous,
From the bending boughs by the shelving shore
And the laugh of white waves on a foam-kissed floor,
All last Spring?

All this Spring, when far apart
Wearily beats each wistful heart,
What have the days to tell us now,
Of wasted vigil and broken vow,
As the raindrops moan in the black-boughed trees,
Moan to the waters of sundering seas,
All this Spring?

Truly the Light was Sweet.

YES, I am come to you once again,—
But not with a prayer to move you.
Past is the pleasure and past the pain;
I should lie if I said I love you.

But I loved you once, and come what will,
That heaven nor hell can alter;
You gave me a rose, and I kiss it still;
Do you wonder my eyelids falter?

Bright was the sky when you plucked that rose,
Warm was the weak wind's breath;
The stream of that sunlight backward flows
Like a wave from the cliffs of death.

But would I recall a single hour
Of all the sweet Summer shed?
Love, like the pale stephanotis flower,
Is sweetest of scent when dead.

The light is out; the withered sprays
Of the rose-tree trail at my feet;
But the rose was dear in the dear dead days,
And truly the light was sweet.

A Voice of the Spring.

YOUR smiles that glance in the bright Spring weather
Like a glittering burn thro' the wind-kissed heather,
And your fair free curls in their rippling flow,
And your cheek where the blushes come and go,
Where the hot blood mounts at a word of mine
With a flush like the sparkle of flowing wine,
When we are alone together:—

When the Spring lies dead, will its memories start
Like a soft summer shadow o'er each fond heart?
Will it cost a tear when we have to sever
The bond that bound for a lover's for ever?
Shall we ever remember we ever met,
When the years go round and the years forget,
When we are alone—apart?

ὁ πωλευτὴς πωλητής.

WAS there so much to pay, love,
For a slave to kneel at your feet?
Only a word to say, love,
Or a kiss,—for your lips were sweet,—

Only a moment's thought, love,—
But you would not have it so.
Yesterday he was caught, love,
And now you have let him go.

Once, Long Ago.

ἠράμην μὲν ἔγω σέθεν Ἄτθι πάλαι πότα.

SMILE upon smile can win no more;
Like a wanderer in the night,
Vainly there beats at love's shut door
The dream of dead delight.

We shall part and never meet again,
And all that my heart can know
Is that soft sweet sigh of passionate pain,
"I loved you long ago."

ANTEROS.

LIPS that fed me, lips that fired me,
Has your flame then died so soon?
Why has love so early tired me?
Why are all things out of tune?

If my passion tore me, burned me,
I could face the fiercest fate;
If you only loathed me, spurned me,
I could answer hate with hate;

If I felt my sorrow thrilled you,
I could weep and then forget;
If I kissed you as I killed you,
I could dream I loved you yet.

But I see you, touch you, kiss you,
And you sweetly play your part;
Will the worms in hell caress you?
Nothing ever bite your heart?

If we said good-bye for ever,
Would a single tear be shed?
Do you think my lips would quiver,
If I saw you lying dead?

All too well we know what love is,
All too well a kiss's worth,
Bright with spring the heaven above is,
We are only earth to earth:

Oh, the happy heartstrings breaking,
Breaking with a lover's scorn!
Oh, the bitterness of waking
On a loveless morn!

The Scent of the Jasmine.

WARMLY pants the summer air
While you sleep;
Shall I laugh to watch you there?
Shall I weep?

Shall I laugh that love should see,
Thus unseen?
Shall I weep to dream what we
Might have been?

One more kiss before we part
Not to meet;
Let my fingers feel your heart,
If it beat.

Past the bitterness of bliss,
Past the joy.
Love is born to die like this,—
χαῖρέ μοι.

Carefully, with Tears.

BECAUSE you refused the bonds of a love
Of which you had never dreamt—
I thrust you away, and turned to rove
In anger and pride and contempt.

"Plenty of bloom by the road," I said,
"That will come with the slightest touch;
I can leave these lilies all withered and dead,
And gather an armful of roses instead,
Worth more, or at least as much."

I wandered far through the dreary hours,
And feigned and bargained and strove,
But I never could find a smile like yours
Or a love like your want of love;

With many a slip and many a fall,
For the ways were strange and steep,
And the flowers I had gathered I soon let fall,—
So I flung myself down to weep.

There are tears for the lost and tears for the dead
And tears for a ruined Spring;
But the bitterest tears of all to shed,
Are the tears for a foolish thing.

But 'tis something, when blindly the hot tears start
For the love that was never our own,
To feel we have followed a real heart,
Instead of a block of stone.

Non ego sum tanti.

VEX not yourself with overmuch remembering;
Life is too short to waste on withered flowers;
Time loved us once, but now he walks dismembering
All the fair fashion of the happy hours.

Why should you care if lips that loved you, miss you?
Yours was the grace and theirs the lasting debt.
Love's hour is done; they never more can kiss you;
How can they chide you then that you forget?

Love where you will, and shadow-like if ever
Dreams of the past should darken in your breast,
Cool as a cloudlet in the noontide's fever,
Light may they fly and vanish in the West.

I will remember, as, when leaves are falling,
A bleak white wall with gaunt bare branches hung
Sighs in the dim October dawn, recalling
Roses that kissed it when the year was young.

I will remember, but your eyes will glisten
Like gentians gathered on some old moraine
Where streamlets woo the cold grey stones to listen,—
Dead treasured things that cannot bloom again.

Oxford in November.

I.

If I only could feel your hand on my brow,
If only you could be with me now,
    As I am away with you,
If I only could drink the balm of your breath,
Sweet as the breeze from the windy heath,
    Where the gorse flowers blossomed and blew,—

If only when toilsome night lay dead
And cooled was each floweret's day-worn head
    With the tears that the angels wept,
I could creep to your side in the first grey light,
Mother of morning and child of night,
    And steal a kiss while you slept,—

Oh, the world, it were not so weary then
With its doubtings of God and its wranglings of men,
With its pitiful love and hate.—
Well, heaven will heal bruised hearts, they say,
You will love me as I love you, some day;—
But it seems so long to wait.

II.

WHAT can I find to sing to you, sweetest,
Of the dull drear round of my days,
Buy or borrow to bring to you, sweetest,
From my life's vain wearisome ways?

For the world means nothing without you, sweetest;
'T is so empty of pleasure and care
That I almost begin to doubt you, sweetest,
If ever you really were.

All gone, but the long lone love for you, sweetest;
That never can die nor sleep,
Tho' folded in meek despair are the hands that strove for you, sweetest,
And the eyes are too weary to weep.

III.

I owe you song upon song, dear,
But I cannot sing them to-night,
For the day has been dark and long, dear,
And they should be happy and bright.

They would weary you, sweet, with their weeping;
So I send you my heart instead,
To watch by your side while you 're sleeping
And to sit at the foot of your bed.

And oh, if you turn in your slumber
And smile as you used to do,
'T will be sweeter than any number
Of songs I could send to you.

Philosophy.

THE wrangling bells clash out the hour of prayer,
The sick sun fades from the November sky,
Like love that looked and yearned and passed away
Long time ago, when faith and life were young,
And each fresh step on passion's path was bright
To childish feet, that wist not where they strayed.
Weary, alone, and almost faithless now,
I come to worship at your altar here.

I know that all the past is dim and dead,
And all the present full of faded flowers;
My heavy heart, weary of day and night,
Faints for the fragrance breathing from their bloom,
And all the memory clinging to them still;
I see the future, like the silent sea,

With scarce a wind or wave to wreck the soul
Dank with the stagnant waters of the world.

Why should I fear, when I can never know
If joy or grief, if life or death be best?
Why should I hope, when fate has nought to give
But what may be the fancy of my brain,
Heated with fumes from an imagined hell,
Or soothed with balm from a phantastic heaven?
Why should I care, when I can never know
Even if you, life's love, have ever been?

Nothing to know and nothing to believe!
Man may not know. Till what we dream is life
Have yielded place to what we dream is death,
Dim fashioned phantoms hover o'er our heads,
Angels to bless us, demons to dismay,
Dear lips to love—and yet we never know
But that the hope, the fear, is all a dream,
A vague unmeaning melancholy dream.

Hand clasped in loving hand, or proudly lone,
We stagger down the waste ways of the world
Like travellers in a snowstorm, faint and blind;
The strongest hearts toil farthest thro' the gloom;
Yet they will die, they know that they will die,
Wearied at last, and the swift silent flakes
Hide them for ever from the feet that come
Weary hereafter to die upon their graves.

Therefore I come and kneel before you, child—
Not that I know that you were ever sweet,
Not that I know that you have ever been,
But that a dream is hovering o'er my heart,
Sweeter than waking life could ever be,
And you were all the sweetness of the dream.
Therefore I kneel before your altar, child,
And kneeling, pray, "Oh, let me dream again!"

April.

A HAILSTONE dropped in my hand one day,
Bright and white as a heart I know;
I pressed it close to my lips and so,—
See, it melted away.

A white little heart was mine one day,
Bright and white as an hailstone is;
I pressed it close to my lips to kiss,—
See, it melted away.

Thither and Thence.

I.

JUST a glance at the girths to save a wreck,
And a touch of the curb to feel the chain,
And my fingers rest on my horse's neck
As I canter along the country lane.

It's a short two hours if you walk the hills,
With an easy or so when the sun gets hot;
So before the minute that cures or kills
There's yet some time, so I'll think. Why not?

It's nine long months since I rode this way,
Nine long months since I saw you last;
Spring and summer were dead that day,
And now once more has the spring-time past.

We have both seen much since those short swift hours,
Laughing and sighing, abroad and at home—
Here in this winter-wed England of ours,
Or there in the sun-coloured shadow of Rome.

And all those seasons of shower and sun,
Have they all dealt kindly with you, my child,
Since the last sweet thing that my eyes saw done,
Since the last farewell that those sweet lips smiled?

Is the small soft mouth still warm and bright?
Are the cheeks still mate to the morning's glow?
Has the brow its whiteness, the lips their light?
So much may be lost in a year, you know.

Nearer and nearer my horse hoofs ring;
H—— now, and my doubts still there;
Oh, the hopes and the fears that struggle and sting!
Shall I find your heart, as your face was, fair?

Faded or fair tho' I find you now,
Fair or faded, my life's last sun,
If my lips lose breath in the light of your brow
Or never again till the world is done,

Tho' the flying seasons have spared not to smite
The lips that laughed at their iron rod,
Tho' Time have sullied the silver white
Of the soul that was dear in the eyes of God,

We are more than Time and his pitiful powers,
We are more than the seasons that smite and fly,
For the treasured sweetness of garnered hours
Is stored in the heart of heaven on high.

II.

THE first faint stars are beginning to start
As I ride through the lanes alone;
The sunset shivers across my heart
Like the moon on a wave-wet stone.

The sky is too sweet for sorrow,
I will smile with the sky to-night;
But what will it be to-morrow,
And what shall I lose with the light?

Ah, dreams that awoke for a day
Of pleasure too sweet to die,
And hopes too dim to brighten the way,
And a smile as we say "Good-bye."

Ah, dreams that will never die,
Of pleasure too sweet to last,
Ah, hopes lips whispered too sweet to lie,
Though passion and pity are past.

As when a morn broke bright,
Then clouded and turned to grey,
The sky beams blue in the evening light,
Too late to redeem the day.

Autumn.

I.

It 's Liszt he 's playing,—we sit and hear,
And a sadness shadows the eyes that smiled;
I watch in the dusk from the window here,
Like a chained wolf watching a sleeping child.

Yes, it is dark, but I see it all,—
The soft white curve of the perfect chin,
The wave of hair where my kiss would fall,
And the subtle charm where the lips begin.

Wär' ich ein Vöglein,—What if I were?
Would my song still be by your window pane,
Too sad for love, too sweet for despair?—
Wär' ich die Sonne,—those notes again!

Wär' ich die Sonne,—what ray could fall
In the life of you from the love of me?
Only my yearning spread as a pall
O'er dreams that never on earth may be,
Only your pity over all
Like the moon on the winter sea.

II.

As a child that is sleeping
Tenderly,
Weary with weeping,
Or with play, may be.

So the gift of God's giving
Lies love to-day,
In the guise of one living,—
With the life away.

To keep you from spying
The way that he died,—
Like a dead leopard lying
On its wounded side.

On the South Coast.

You stood a moment in the hall,
"Come out with me," you said,
One hand you leant against the wall,
One on your deerhound's head.

The lawn sloped down towards the beach,
Gay with geranium beds,
With blue lobelia set in each
Between the pinks and reds.

White butterflies careered about
Among the greenery,
And bright the summer sun shone out
Over the summer sea.

Under the Clock.

ONCE more we stand together, side by side,
And days that were lie like a writ unrolled,
Nor nameless fears nor envious hours divide;
Once more we stand together, as of old.

What of the end? Will passion break anew,
Or, like a meteor flashing through the night,
Your presence blind the memory of you,
And leave life darker for the faded light?

Once more we stand together, on the brink
Of other days. I view the path we trod;
The flickering lamps grow dim, the sure stars sink.
But God is good; I leave the end with God.

FURTHERMORE

We stood a moment on the stair together
Side by side,
Like two stray seaweeds whirled in windy weather
Athirt the tide,
That some chance wave has tossed and twined together
Not to bide.

My shadow fell across your face and falling
Kissed your cheek,
And like some grey-lipped wind-worn cloud empalling
A snowy peak,
My soul's dark shadow clasped you round, and falling
Strove to speak,—

To tell of all we might have known together,
Side by side,
To tell those frail white hands how tight a tether
They might have tied,
If we had lived, if we had loved together
One springtide.

δός μοι τὸ ποτηρίον.

STRANGE,—I met a woman to-night,
Twenty, and married, and not much more,
The usual mixture of red and white,
Brown hair, blue eyes, as I've seen before,

And yet, at a word, at a laugh of her lips,
Memories started, I know not how,—
Shadow and shine and that last eclipse
That I shudder and shiver to think of now;

Memories of days like plumelets shed
From the beat of the wings of the years as they flew,
Memories of hours that laughed and sped
While suns were golden and skies were blue.

And a kind of pain like love once was
Woke with the fancies that would not die;
Should I simply do as the whole world does,
Laugh and gossip and so pass by?

Or should I throw down my soul at her feet,
To live by the breath of her brow and hair,
To drain the bitter and scorn the sweet,
Die, and be glad for the days that were?

For the greatest love in the world, we know,
Is the love that seeks what it may not find,
Till heaven have melted our hearts' hard snow,
Till we leave the world and its ways behind.

Could the old love wake in a woman's form,
Start from the sleep that it loved so well?
Could the calm that killed it rouse it in storm
In the lurid light of a fierier hell?

Wildly my heart-beats went and came,
Like the waves that worry a sea-worn stone,
As I fought with the fiends of the world and its shame,
As I wrestled there with my soul alone.

So the night went by, and the day broke fair,
And bright was the cynical smile of the sea,
And the 9.5 carried her, God knows where,—
Woman, what have I to do with thee?

Well, bring me a bottle of brandy then,
And I 'll mix and empty a drink for her sake.
For loving was made for happier men,
Who 've hearts to love with and hearts to break.

I have no heart to finish these verses, or to think of you any more. They say that I loved you, and I did love you,—for five minutes it was perhaps, but I did love you; and now love has faded out of it all, like the sunset from the snows we used to watch together, and I have no heart to think of you any more. So take these verses, like a basket of ferns left out overnight through an early frost, with bright green leaves and bright white rime, but dead, quite dead. For I do not wish to think ill of you; I do not wish to think of you at all.

"*Sis felix et sint candida fata tibi;*"

the whole couplet is rather appropriate.

SATURDAY afternoon, before
The Very Reverend—God knows who,
Duly assisted by half a score,—
Can't bother to read the whole thing through,—
Is it played out, then? Is there nothing more

For me, as I sit at the valley head
  Where I sat with her once, one Autumn day,
And try to remember each word she said,
  Each least little whisper, grave or gay,
As we cherish the least light word of the newly dead?

"I had grown pure as the dawn or the dew,
  You had grown strong as the sun or the sea,"
Had heaven made one the hearts that are two,
  Had the deep, still stream of the love in me
Slaked the thirst of the soul in you.

But now we are twain, we are cloven apart,—
  I sit and wonder and watch the while
The white clouds wander, the sunbeams start,
  As God may watch, with a sigh or a smile,
The sun on your eyes, the clouds on my heart.

As I climbed this path at the break of day
  Each dewdrop glanced, like a summer star,
On harebell and rose with a tremulous ray
  That a breeze might scatter, a footfall mar,
Or the glance of a sunbeam might smile away.

Where the mountain's brow is athrob with the heat
  A light white cloud like a maiden's hand
Rests for a moment, fitful and fleet,
  Then fades in the blue like a wave on the sand,
Like a year of longing when lovers meet.

Though earth be barren and heaven be wide,
  The cloud and the dew will have done their part
If a flower was born on the mountain side,
  If a seed was born in a floweret's heart,
If a harebell blossomed before it died.

And the love that woke in the heart of the child
  And found no home in the woman's heart,
The joy to remember the way she smiled,
  The passion to play the least light part
In the masque called Life that her lips beguiled,

Must they faint and fall like a frost-nipped flower
  And wither away for a marriage bell?
No, God knows better the . . .* power
  Of the look that has lifted a heart from hell,
Of the word that made pure a soul for an hour.

They are not dead, the strange sweet days
  When heaven was near me, I knew not why;
Though I may faint on the world's waste ways,
  Pressed to the heart of God on high,
They are not dead, the strange sweet days.

* A word of two syllables is missing in the manuscript.

Heaven, had you loved in a look; a smile,—
Clouds, see the glory breaking through!
You will not love,—but what if the while
I should love on in despite of you?
Is a heaven lost for the want of a smile?

One dream is mine, and the dream is this,
To stand and strive in the perilous way
For the good to be with the ill that is,
That a smile may greet me in heaven one day
From the lips that on earth I forebore to kiss.

Then she will know,—but now, let be;
The kisses for him, but the love for both,
Silent, as ever it was, with me,
Spending the soul of me, nothing loth,
Like a hidden spring in the heart of the sea.

For the Grace of Sweet Words.

Now that the year is done,
Now that a wintry sea
Rolls between you and me,
What can we find to tell
Of the days that we loved so well?

Summer was with us then;
Summer, whose heart is fire
And the breath of his lips desire,
Faded, we know not how;
Winter is with us now.

Love was the song of the summer,
Love was the sunbeam's song
As his fleet hours flitted along,
And the last faint word in his mouth,
When he wandered home to the South.

Summerlit autumn hours,
Breathing from opal skies
Kissed by the sun as he dies,
Whispered his song in our ear;
But we would not turn and hear.

We played by the portal of love,
Twining with wreaths of roses
The gates of his garden-closes,
Just where his realms begin:—
But we would not enter in.

Love's is a tear-brimmed cup,
Bitter are tears to drink;
Sweeter than they, we think,
Is the last faint flickering breath
Of the roses fading to death.

What if the roses fade?
They were glad of the golden day,
And we were gladdened as they
By the glitter on leaf and stem,—
What if we fade like them?

Love is not all that a man
May give to a sister soul
Rocked by the surges that roll
As the breakers rise and fall;
Love is not all in all.

Memories of careless hours,
Swift as a sea-gull's wing
O'er the waves as they whiten in spring,
Brighten the past from afar
With a beam like a setting star.

Hands Across the Sea.

I.

And if they were only a dream, the days
We lived together, when life would seem
Like notes of the lute that an angel plays,—
If they were only a dream,

Like a handful of flowers on a mountain stream,
Scattered for none to be glad of or praise
In the water's glitter and gleam,

They once were dear to the careless gaze
Of the children that found them beneath the beam
Of the sun that smiles, though the summer decays—
If they were only a dream.

II.

DREAMS of ours may wake a memory yet
Like the sudden sight of faded flowers
On a page that never can forget
Dreams of ours.

Hearts that played with passion and his powers,
Hands that plucked for pleasure's coronet
Mortal moments from the immortal hours,

There, beneath the pinewood's parapet,
Here, by chilly old world Oxford towers,
Still hold fast enmeshed in memory's net
Dreams of ours.

Do the Gods Judge Right?

THE sweetest love that is given on earth
Is the love that we know must end,
That wakes with the Spring o'er meadow and firth
Such time as the young boughs bend,
And dies or ever the snows have birth
Or the lover becomes a friend.

It will wander away from this cloud-wrapped sphere
To a place that God has given,
Far from the favour and far from the fear
Of days forgotten or forgiven,
And the golden chain that was broken here
We shall rivet anew in heaven.

Heaven and Earth.

We gaze on the sky above
  And say it is heaven,
We dream of an infinite love
  And of sins forgiven:

While, circling each distant star,
  Dark worlds like our own
Dream, as they gaze from afar,
  That here is God's throne.

Mors et Vita.

SWIFT loves speed by
To their hidden graves,
Like the swift white crests
Of the wind-borne waves.

The waves roll back,
When they reach the shore;
The old loves live
In the new once more.

Chiara.

THE shimmering hazes danced midsummer-mad;
Mile upon weary mile each white-worn stone
Glared on the white-worn road. Where daisy-grown
Orsino's meadows murmur myriad,
I found one little lamb, forlorn and sad,
Feeding among a flock of goats alone.
I caught her to me, made her all mine own,
And journeyed on; and she and I were glad.

I found you, O my Chiara, prisoned in
A world of ruthless wrong. I could divine
The sorrowing soul, the loathing deep within,
The blood that burned like sacramental wine.
I tore you thence, and made you God's,—and mine.—
Men praise the first, they call the last a sin.

In October.

WHY should we tend the late flowers that they die not,
Flowers of the pale October day?
Why should we hold the light loves that they fly not?
Summer is over, and why not they?

Summer is sleeping and winter awaking
To eyes that were dreaming of days too sweet;
Winter is balm to the hearts that were breaking
Under the tread of love's summer-shod feet.

The Lesson of the Years.

NEW year, new love; the guerdon that was his
  Each Winter steals, that steals the Summer roses,
  Spring wakes to life o'er whispering garden-closes,
And finds no memory of last year's kiss.
And now, like wan-white bloom of eucharis,
  Spring's fire-fed day on Autumn's breast reposes,
  And each faint fitful breeze that comes or goes is
Cold as a night wind from the fields of Dis.

Call not the heart, the wandering heart untrue,
  If with new song it call new hearts to hear,
    If with new wings Time's glittering feet be shod;
Love is not dead because his garb is new,
  Love, like the may, is born again each year,
    And each fresh Spring-time draws us nearer God

ἔτι καθ' ὑπερβολὴν ὁδόν.

In the days when love was the light of my eyes,
The days that knew not that Time grew old,
The sun would set and the stars would rise
Wrapt in a mist of gold,

Dim with the breath of kisses kissed
On throbbing eyelid or burning brow;—
But a mist it was, though a golden mist;
I can see things plainer now.

I can see in the glint on a broken shard,
In the glimmering slime on a worm-gnawed shroud,
A glimpse of a light of heaven, unmarred
Even by a golden cloud;

In each faint blade of the grass down trod,
In each light leaf of the boughs above,
A power of the deathless beauty of God
That is more than a man's weak love.

νάρκη.

LIKE a quivering apple-bloom let
  Fall before the summer sings,
Like an eddying silvery plumelet
  From a ring-dove's whirring wings,

Was the love than death's self stronger
  That I sought, and that I found,—
Will it take an hour or longer
  Till it 's trodden in the ground?

In March.

When the garden beds are sodden and seared with the biting showers,
When the black loam clings to the corpses of the frost-bitten foolish flowers,
When the blank of the fog-dimmed cloud-drift is as weary and wan and wild
As the face of a beggar-woman stilling a starving child,
And the wind comes round the corner in that English way that—well,
Makes you doubtful of heaven and only certain of hell,
And the heart that God once gave you is as hard as the East Wind's teeth
And as blank as the sky above you and as chill as the ground beneath,
Have you never heard a dog's quick bark, or a laugh from the lips of a boy,
To tell you the world's still happy, tho' you may have done with joy?

"Vivitur Ingenio."

YES, you can give me the letter;
No fear of a "sudden blow."
At eleven yesterday morning?
Why, he died five years ago.

That shadow that sobbed into silence
The friend that I used to know?
Is it soul or worm's-meat our friends are?
Why, he died five years ago.

Was his soul forbidden heaven,
Tho' banned from its home below,
When the gloom first fell about him,
And he died, five years ago?—

Yes, you may go into mourning,
For the world will have it so,
That he died yesterday morning,
When he died five years ago.

Explicit.

"This low man with a little thing to do
Sees it and does it."

You think one ought to have an aim in life?
Well, the idea is generally rife
That one should strive for something, spend one's soul
In stretching, straining up towards some goal
Placed, heaven knows where, but anyhow too high
For anyone to reach; so once thought I,
When I was young,—or younger, if you like.
I too had lofty notions once: to strike
A death blow at the follies and the fears
Born of the carcase of the rotting years,
Stand with arms stretched to all mankind and give
Guerdon for living and delight to live,
Strength for the faint, light for the blind, and love

Sent down to me by some sweet second dove,—
That high on heaven's still heights purity's snow
From fading passion caught an after-glow,
A beacon through the turmoil and the strife
Gleaming, till night grew one with day, till life
Grew one with love;—I knew it all exact,
Lilies and lips and all; one day in fact
Wrote an account of what the world would be
When it had reached perfection, all through me.
But somehow fancies, like the roses, die,
And one grows older as the days go by;
Twenty's the age of disillusionment
They tell me; well, my dreaming power was spent
Sooner, it seems. When early snow lies thick
Upon the pear trees, comes the gardener quick,
Shakes off the silvery splendour from each bough
And leaves it gaunt, black, ugly; only now,
Instead of snapping, it will bloom next year;
It doesn't look so well, though. So, I fear,
We find it is with life. Hard facts remain

Tho' haloes vanish. Struggle, strive, and strain
To win the height where "meteors shoot, clouds form,
Lightnings are loosed and joy breaks with the storm,"
And reach it worn, hot, breathless. Who 's to blame
If winds that beat about the peaks of fame
Give you a touch of chill, or worse perhaps,
Unless you take a sip of moral schnapps
Enough to roll you off? "No, thanks," said I;
"There 's mountain-sickness if you climb too high,
And that 's not pleasant."
So you find me here,
"Being, not doing"; and I rather fear
The world has lost a writer; for of late
I 've scarce put pen to paper, and the fate
Of old Propertius seems menacing,—
Except when memories of another spring
Come like the wind from off a wall-flower bed,
Heavy and sweet, and will not be gainsaid,—
And then it helps me, rubbing up my rhymes.—
Reading Achilles Tatius or the *Times*,

Writing a letter, cutting down a tree,
Trying a horse,—why, there's my life and me.
Bloom breaks, the dead leaves fall and spring grows old
And summer's emerald turns to autumn's gold:
So one eats strawberries, sees the roses grow,—
(La Marque's my favourite, with its leaf like snow,
Or—your hand, shall we say? and golden heart
Of hidden honey where the petals start
From the mother stem that bore them. Ah, La Marque,
What memories muster from the dreamy dark
Dead days at breath of yours,—(I've always found
Scent brings back memories more than sight or sound,)—
Once, in the days that I was speaking of,
Before I had forgotten how to love,
I came into the hall and found a bowl
Full of La Marques, and somehow felt my soul
Start like the first ray after an eclipse,
Fly in a rose-sweet kiss to someone's lips,
Fall,—I've forgotten what one says, you know,
I could have told you more some years ago.)—

Well, so I watch the roses till they fade,
And then the dahlias, till the leaves, afraid
Of the winter evenings, faint and long to die,—
Glad of a little sunshine in the sky,
Glad of a snowdrop peering through the snow,
And thus fulfilling life; because to know
The beauty of God's creatures and be glad
Is life indeed. You say mankind is sad?
Give me a flower; until death strike me blind
I can be happy and forget mankind.
There is more beauty in the least light leaf
Than there is sorrow in all the wide world's grief.
Heaven 's promised? Very well; but earth is given;
And why should earth's use spoil one's chance of heaven?
So now, not after, I have chosen my part,
Loving the earth, clasped close to Nature's heart;
Do what you have in hand, and God will show
What thing is next to do; love what you know,
And learn to love the unknown. That is life

Such as God wills, not your blind barren strife
To be wiser, better,—richer than the rest.
Do your own part, and do not try to wrest
Your fellow's from him. That's my motto now,
My life, I hope.—
"But surely you allow
This is not all, to live and breathe and die,
An all-containing, all-fulfilling I,
A rose-fed pig in an æsthetic sty?
Man needs ideals, work, to start and stir
The God born in him. Else, what barrier
'Twixt man and moss?"
Well, in God's sight, who knows?
The man that labours, and the flower that grows—
You look surprised. Well, never mind; you said,
Without ideals man's as good as dead,
Man needs ideals, work,"—I know he does;
Man needs, not God. Look at the matter thus.
You see that dormouse? He's asleep just now,
He mostly is, I think,—but anyhow

Come after dark, you 'll find him scampering
Round in his wheel-cage there like anything.
He doesn't get much further; well, what then?
He gets an appetite. And so with men.
Most men would die without some work to do,—
Of moral indigestion. Which in view
You get the longing for the thing afar,
The moth's wild yearning for the evening star,
(Or boy's for the moon—as good a metaphor,)
Their spirit 's constitutional, no more,
To give a flavour to their bread and cheese,
And kisses too. My appetite for these
And other things which God has pleased to show
"Which you profane will never come to know",
Seems strong enough already. Then, why wait
Till one has "striven to set the crooked straight",
Till evening dim the brightness of the day
And heads like hearts have got their dash of grey,
Before begin enjoy?
And yet, and yet,

The old nature clings. It 's hard to quite forget
What one believed once. "Struggle, strive and strain.
On earth farewell; in heaven once again
My lips meet yours. But first the pang, the pain".—
The old golden mist once more! Ah, God, to pray,
If but this heart would suffer me, and say,
Like the old Lesbian proverb, "But for me
Neither the honey nor the honey-bee!"—

H'm, interesting confessions, these of mine!
I beg your pardon! Won't you take some wine?
Lacrimæ Christi,—quaint name, isn't it?
This comes from Spain; they 've altered it a bit
Since they 've adopted it at Malaga.—
You don't take wine? Got a blue ribbon? Bah!

FROM AMONG BOOKS

ONCE, in the days my heart is dreaming of,
Not God Himself could make you waver from my love,
You told me, Lesbia. How I loved you then,
My child, with all the strong pure love of men for men.
Lesbia, I know you now;
And though I love yet more, nor count the cost,
You seem some common thing with all its value lost.
Well, one must love; the old witcheries remain;
Yes, love,—but never care to wish you well again.

(After *Catullus* lxxii.)

Xenophon v. 1.

TAKING a volume from my shelf one day,
Of a weary English winter afternoon,
I turned to Xenophon of Ephesus;—
An author of the Hellenistic school
Of quite uncertain date, but mostly placed
Under the later Antonines; he lived
After Augustus, and before the reign
Of Gallienus, as his name implies;
And a certain simple roughness of his style
Would seem to put him near Parthenius—
(On all which questions see Casperius).
Well, ceterum, he lived and died and wrote,
Better than most and worse than one or two,
A story no one now finds time to read,
Or even edit—*Quanti homines!*—
And this is what I found:

"She had agreed
To fly together with me in the night
From Lacedaemon. So we dressed ourselves
As boys (I clipped those golden locks of hers
On her very wedding night), and thus escaped
To Argos and to Corinth, and from there
Loosing, we sailed and came to Sicily.
And they of Lacedaemon, when they heard
That we were fled, condemned us both to death;
But we lived here, in poverty maybe,
And yet it seemed that all the world was ours
Because we had each other. Here she died—
Thelxinoe—not long before you came.
I could not bury her, I keep her still
To be with me, and ever kiss her face,
And sit beside her as I used to do."
He spoke, and straightway led Habrocomes
Into the inner chamber of the house,
And showed him where Thelxinoe was laid,—
A grey-haired woman—in the old man's eyes
A maiden still. (Now he had buried her

Egyptian-wise, skilled in this art as well.)
"'T is here, my child, I come and talk to her
As to one living, and pledge her in my wine,
And lie beside her all the long night thro';
And if I come home weary from the sea,
She looks at me, and I am comforted.
Not as you see it seems her face to me;
My eyes can see her as she was of old,
Those nights in Lacedaemon, in her home,—
That night we fled together."
Then the rest:
Habrocomes begins to moan and groan,
Calling himself unhappier by far—
Αἰγιαλεῖ γὰρ παραμυθία
μεγάλη σῶμα τῆς Θελξινόης,
Etcetera. Some chapters further on
Our hero wanders back to Sicily,
καὶ εὑρίσκει τὸν πρότερον ξένον
τεθνηκότα. Ah, Xenophon, we know—
Then, now, for ever *ὅρον οὐκ ἔχει*
ἡλικίας ἀληθινὸς ἔρως.

Nicetas Eugenianus iv. 345.

THE Graces stand around thy head,
O maid of my desire,
And gently watch about thy bed
With eyes that never tire,
Lest any ill should chance to fall
From fortune's hand inimical.

Thy lips, thy cheeks, Dame Nature dyed
As tho' they fed a flame,
And rolled thee ringlets down thy side
That gold itself might shame.
How sweet thy breath, thy smiles that seem
To light the fancy of thy dream!

No voice is heard nor sparrow's cry
Nor any sound at all
Of traveller who hurries by
Or lizard on the wall,
The very winds have ceased to blow,
They do regard thy beauty so.

The birds their carols have foregone,
The stillness is complete,
Only the fountains murmur on
To make thy slumber sweet,
Their voice the streamlet whispering,
"Ah, girt with every gracious thing,

"Silent art thou, and thee to please
The wind doth silence keep,
Thou sleepest, and the cooling breeze
Has sunk with thee to sleep;
The song-birds cease their minstrelsy,
For lack of thy sweet rivalry."

But choose not overmuch, we pray,
Sleep and his poppied spell,
It grieves methinks to miss thy lay
Thy rival Philomel,
That lay to hers to be preferred,
For honey is thy every word.

Ah, maidens three, whose bosoms glance,
Keep watch with me to-day;
Guard her from every evil chance,
And help me drive away
The greedy flies that long to sip
The nectar from her honeyed lip.

Charicles Inquit.

If I had died before you,
What tho' the dead rise not;
For the great love I bore you
I had risen on the spot,
Again to kneel before you,—
What tho' the dead rise not.

But now that you are taken,
Ah, lost and gone before,
Never may hope to waken
On any farther shore
My soul by you forsaken,
Ah, lost and gone before.

(*Nicetas Eugenianus* vi. 75.)

Florentissima Maria Augusta.

Salue, sidereae proles augusta Serenae
Magnorum suboles regum, parituraque reges.

"In Nuptias Honori et Mariae
Claudii Claudiani." There it is,
Twenty-six quarto pages more or less,
Burmann and Delrius and Heinsius
Variae lectiones and the rest,
Venus and Cupid and Thermantia,
The lips like roses and the neck like rime,
The hair like violets and the eyes like fire.—
So thro' it all. "Perhaps for *uterus*
Read *proles*, with the Oxford Manuscript."
Then at the end comes the historian's note.
"She married him as quite a child, and died
Soon after, nympha delicatula.

They found her grave not long ago at Rome,
She in her robes, pretiosissimum,
And by her side the little golden ball
She used to play with."

Thus Claverius.

χεράδες.

I.

WITLESS fools and vain to weep for the dead that are passed away,
With never a tear for the bloom of youth that is perishing day by day.

MIMNERMUS? (*Theognis*, 1069-70.)

II.

Drive your car on the way you have ever driven,
Traitor soul to my love revealed, confessed,
Go, mistrusted of men and hated of heaven,
'Twas but a cold bright snake I clasped to my breast.

THEOGNIS? (599-602.)

III.

Woe, ah, woe is me, for youth and age the destroyer,
Age that is coming apace, youth that is hastening away.

MIMNERMUS? (*Theognis*, 527-8.)

IV.

Fired was my heart of old when Theudis shone
Amid his fellows like the rising morn,
That smiles the stars to scorn;
So still it burns, even now his day is done.
The sun, although 'tis set, is still the sun.

STRATON (*Anth. Pal.* xii. 178.)

V.

Think, ah, think of the day that I spoke my message of warning,
"Fairest of all things is youth, readiest of all things to fly;
Youth once fled not a bird may o'ertake, not the swiftest in heaven."
See the bloom that was yours scattered to die on the ground.

THYMOCALES (*Anth. Pal.* xii. 32.)

VI.

A brutal outrage, kissing you?—Dear me!
Well,—kiss me back; then we 'll be quits, you see.

STRATON (*Anth. Pal.* xii. 188.)

VII.

Thou gazest at the stars, my Star.—Would I might come to be
The whole wide heaven, that I might look with myriad eyes on thee.

PLATO (14.)

VIII.

Short was the man, short is the grave, short will be my song.
Theris, the Cretan runner, lies here, and will lie here long.

CALLIMACHUS (*Anth. Pal.* vii. 447.)

IX.

But I will go my way to yonder sloping hill,
Singing along the sandy beaches of the sea;
My prayer shall be to cruel Galatea still,
Nor will I leave my long sweet hope until
My last lone hour is past and life has done with me.

BION 15, (12.)

L'Abbaye aux Bois.*

Two bits of blossom picked by you;—
You called it jasmine,—'tis n't true,
But what 's the name to be?
Your fingers picked them none the less;
The one you fastened on your dress,
And one you gave to me.

Here lies my bit.—Euripides
Hecuba 's open on my knees;
Slip it among the scenes,
And shut the book, and let it stay
Here for some one to find some day
And wonder what it means.

* The name of a country-house near Paris, belonging to a relation, where this poem and the one following it were written.

There let it slumber quietly;
One calls that immortality,
The thing that men love best.—
Where is your piece now? Who can say?
It faded, and was thrown away.
It faded on your breast.

ALL is laughter and dust and ashes,
Sprung from the ground to be lost in the grave
When the last faint shudder of death's wave washes
Over the soul you were sent to save.

Why be glad of the day, my brother,
Why be merry and sing?
For death ends all things, one with the other,
And death is a grievous thing.

All is laughter and dust and ashes,
Sprung from the ground to be lost in the grave
When the last faint shudder of death's wave washes
Over the soul you were sent to save.

Why be heavy of heart, my brother,
Why be weary or weep?
For death ends all things, one with the other,
And death is a dreamless sleep.

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